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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Significant Trends

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Political Tension in Bulgaria 3

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Political Tension in Bulgaria

The political situation in Bulgaria has grown more critical as intensified efforts by the Communist-dominated coalition Government to consolidate its control over the country have met with increasing resistance from the opposition. A Government campaign of intimidation and unprecedented violence is now under way, and the opposition is reported even to be preparing for possible armed resistance. Both groups have been impelled by the same factors: the anticipated general elections this fall, prospects of the withdrawal of Soviet troops when a peace treaty has been concluded, and the moral support given the opposition by the Western Powers.

Before the Soviets withdraw their troops, they must establish permanent safeguards for their own strategic, political, and economic interests, including a stable and subservient, or at least friendly, regime. Soviet interests, however, also dictate that these aims be achieved without provoking civil war.

As a new step in that direction, therefore, the Soviets have set about to neutralize the Bulgarian Army which under its present leadership has exercised a major restraining influence on Communist policy. By giving political commissars authority over troops equal to that of operational commanders, effective control of the Army is being transferred from the Conservative Minister of War to Communists in the Government and a thorough purge of all non-Communists in the ranks is imminent. This purge probably will be successful because the presence of Soviet occupation troops would forestall any effective resistance. In addition, the Soviets are reportedly preparing to assign technicians to the Army who would be competent to take over Bulgarian military establishments in the event of internal unrest after Soviet troop withdrawal, and are infiltrating into the country large numbers of Soviet citizens both as administrators of Soviet-acquired German property and as civilian members of the NKVD.

These measures may give the Communists sufficient security to permit them to relax the rule of terror and, as a bid for recognition by the Western Powers, they may offer the opposition more favorable terms for participation in the Government.

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